

Northern Virginia Long-Term Care UPDATE

Information and Issues from the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

2003 Survey of Existing Provisions for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residents in Long-Term Care Facilities

In conjunction with the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NVRC), the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program surveyed seventy of the long-term care facilities in northern Virginia, with fifty-one participants responding. The survey was to determine what assistive devices and other accommodations long-term care facilities have in place for residents who are deaf or hard of hearing. *Thank you very much to all who responded.*

- Forty-seven of the fifty-one respondents indicated that staff is trained to recognize hearing loss and to modify their communication to accommodate residents with hearing loss.
- Forty-nine facilities responded that staff is trained to turn on, replace batteries, and check the working condition of hearing aids.
- The staff's competency level of American Sign Language is minimal for twenty-five of the respondents, moderate for nine, and seven facilities responded as fluent.
- Seven facilities indicated that they have an American Sign Language interpreter or other sign language interpreter on staff.
- Twenty-four of the respondents state that they have information on obtaining a sign language interpreter if needed.
- Written communication, gestures, communication/writing boards, and pictures are used for residents who do not use sign language.
- Facilities responded that visual smoke detectors with strobe lights are located in all common areas (36), all resident's rooms (21), dining rooms (35), community rooms (34), and restrooms (19).
- Sixteen indicate that the closed captions are always activated on the community television.
- Thirty-three facilities have amplified telephones, fourteen have personal listening devices for those residents without hearing aids, and eleven have text telephones (TTYs).
- Eleven facilities indicated that they are familiar with the Telecommunications Assistance Program and Consumer Service Fund.
- Thirteen facilities indicated that they provide regular recreation and socialization activities for deaf residents who cannot communicate with others except through sign language. They use some variation of one-on-one interaction, group integration and various other social activities.

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- Twenty-four facilities indicated that they provide regular recreation and socialization activities for hard of hearing residents who communicate through speech-reading/lip-reading.
- Twenty-nine respondents indicated that staff receives regular in-service training on working effectively with residents who are deaf or hard of hearing.

We highly recommend that facilities contact the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing as a resource for your hard of hearing residents and to make sure that they are receiving the resources available. After meeting with NVRC, the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program has learned that a large percentage of people with hearing difficulties will say they are hard of hearing when technically, if tested, they would be diagnosed as deaf.

If you have a television that was made in the last ten years, you should have the option of choosing to have closed captions. Check your television manual for instructions on how to turn the closed captions option on.

The Ombudsman Complaint Investigation Log is online!

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ombudsman



Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Volunteer Ombudsman Jon Schleifer

Jon Schleifer has been a volunteer ombudsman for ten years and states that he is motivated by his experiences and the people he has met. "I've met many people over the years and have been told many stories from people from all walks of life, but the most memorable experience I have is when one of the residents who has multiple sclerosis, claps her hands and has a big smile on her face every time I visit."

Jon was born and raised in New York, New York. He has raised two children with his wife of forty-two years. Jon worked in the financial field as a Certified Public Accountant and Chief Financial Officer during his career. He has held several volunteer positions including hospital emergency room volunteer, mentor and teacher in area prisons, and member of the Board of Directors for Gabriel Homes. He is currently volunteering at the Carpenter Shelter for homeless families, in addition to working with the Ombudsman Program.

Jon feels that his social and observational skills, as well as his professional and life experiences, have been essential in his ombudsman work. Jon says his willingness to fight for what he believes in and the ability to tell the difference between what is important and what isn't have also been important to this work.

Although Jon does describe some challenges, such as obtaining the trust of the residents and the staff, admitting that some things cannot be changed, and the passing of residents, he still finds volunteering rewarding. He states that his attitude towards being a volunteer ombudsman has only gotten stronger.

Thank you, Jon, for ten years of devoted service!!

Legislative Watch

The Elder Justice Act S. 333 and H.R. 2490

Although the number of “older Americans” is rapidly increasing, the problem of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation has long been invisible. By designating sufficient resources to support and augment state and community efforts, the Elder Justice Act will help elevate the problem of elder abuse to national prominence and, may one day help put an end to this horrific practice.

Specifically, the Elder Justice Act would:

- (1) create an Office of Elder Justice at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice to coordinate all functions relating to elder justice;
- (2) improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of consumer information through the creation of an Elder Justice Resource Center and Library;
- (3) develop forensic capacity to assist in the detection and prevention of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- (4) offer “safe havens” to victims of abuse;
- (5) provide law enforcement with the necessary tools to support elder justice cases; and
- (6) create a consumer clearinghouse for reporting, background checks, and information on long-term care facilities throughout the United States.

For more information on the Elder Justice Act, please contact the Elder Justice Coalition at elderjustice@erols.com or visit the web site at <http://elderjusticecoalition.org>.

Electronic Monitoring in Virginia Nursing Homes to Detect Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly and Disabled Residents SB 922 “Granny Cams”

This bill would require the Virginia Board of Health to include in its regulations to license nursing facilities, provisions to authorize the use of electronic monitoring devices in the room of a resident of a nursing home for the purpose of detecting abuse or neglect of the resident. The law is required to take into consideration Virginia law relating to nonconsensual interception of wire or electronic communications, privacy rights, notice requirements, covert and noncovert placements of such devices, and potential violations of existing civil and criminal law.

For more information on this bill or other bills, visit the Legislative Information System web site at <http://leg1.state.va.us> and look under SB922.

Give Care, Take Care: A Prescription for Caregivers

Friday, November 21, 2003
9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

In recognition of November as National Family Caregiver Month, Wendy Lustbader, MSW, a nationally known speaker, author, and elder care expert, will present this seminar for caregivers. A ten dollar fee covers the buffet lunch and seminar, which will be held at the Springfield Golf and Country Club. Registration is required. For more information and scholarship availability, go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/service/aaa or call 703-324-5425 or TTY 703-449-1186.

The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in all programs, services and activities and will provide reasonable accommodations and alternate formats upon request. To request accommodations or alternate formats, call 703-324-3575 or TTY: 703-449-1186

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